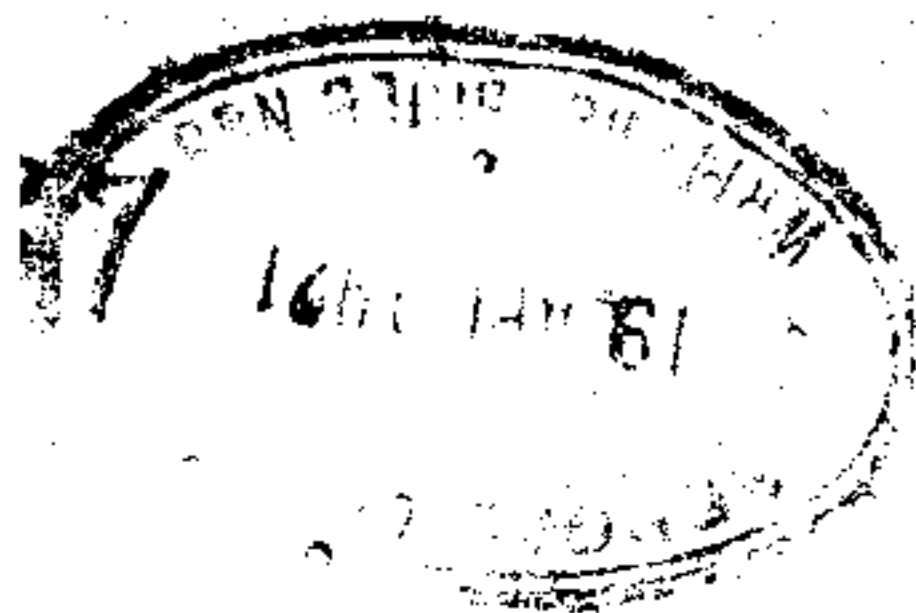


THOUGHTS
ON
PRESENT SITUATION.
(In India.)

BY
A. M. ABDUL HAMID (**Alig**),
Vice-Chairman,
DIST. BOARD.
Hon'ry Magistrate etc,
PABNA.

1920.

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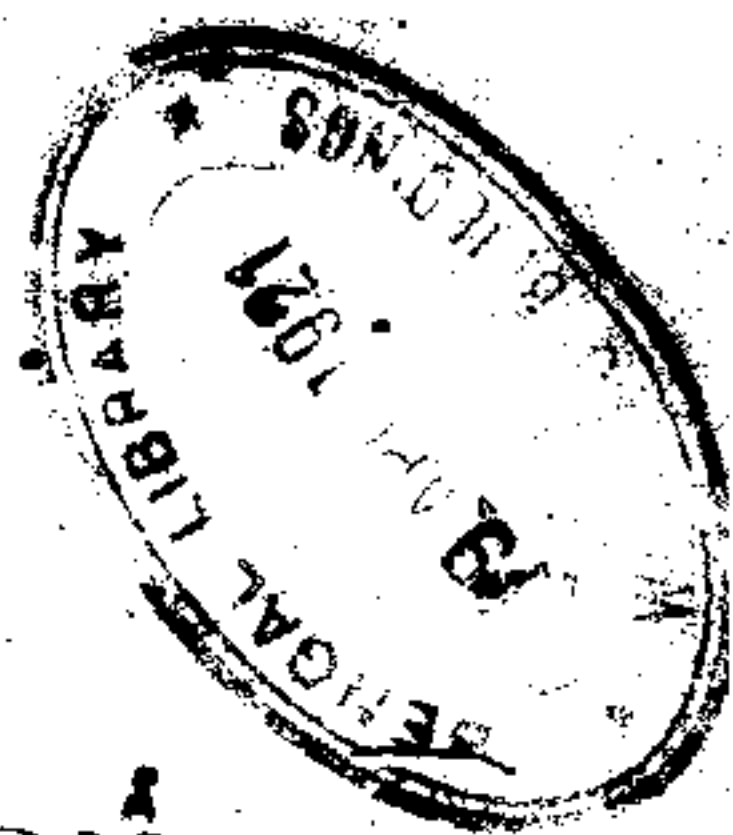
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The topics which are greatly agitating the public mind at the present moment may be briefly put down under the following heads :—

- I. KHILAFAT QUESTION.
- II. THE PUNJAB ATROCITIES.
- III. SWARAJ.
- IV. NON-CO-OPERATION.

These questions have, of late, so much engrossed the minds of the educated section of the community that the Reforms which have been recently accorded to us as a step towards the attainment of popular administration and which in spite of all drawbacks and shortcomings will undoubtedly open a new era for the social and political regeneration of the country, have not found an adequate place in the sphere of their consideration and the majority of them have thought fit to remain aloof from the Reformed Councils. Their minds have been so much perturbed by the Khilafat question and the Punjab atrocities that they in the heat of

"right" shall not invade another man's right. This duty unquestionably demands that Islamic faith should not be invaded. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire has so much touched our heart that even the *Moulanas* who so long used to remain reticent in things political, have thought fit to join in the agitations against the wrongs done to our *Amiral-Mome'in* or Spiritual Leader. But the *Moulanas* untrained as they had been in their political education have been easily waylaid by Mr. Gandhi and his followers and they have without hesitation, begun to preach Non-Co-operation with all the vehemence and influence at their command without waiting to consider how Non-Co-operation in the past has wrought havoc in the Musalman Community by their abstinence from English Education at the beginning of English rule in the Country.

I pretend not to be a politician myself but I fancy that the utter disregard shown to the feelings and sentiments of the whole Moslem world in the drawing up of the treaty with Turkey has been a politically unsound measure fraught with unpleasant consequences.

It is the natural law that the sentiment of a whole society cannot be outraged with impunity. There is at work in these matters an invisible irresistible force which Philosophy and Politics never dream of. The dethronement of Sultan Abdul Hamid, the cruel death inflicted upon the all powerful

Czar, the forced abdication of the much-beloved Kaiser, the disgrace of M. Venezula followed by return of the once-hated Constantine to the Hellenic throne (all through bloodless revolution) are instances of the work of this natural law. Besides, with the yellow peril, a new peril has already sprung up under the name of Bolshevism and if the treatment accorded to Turkey, God forbid, be the cause and occasion of a Moslem peril, and all perils join hands, they will not constitute a small factor to reckon with.

II. The Punjab Atrocities.

The Punjab atrocities much aggravated the Khilafat question in as much as the Hindus who so long abstained from joining any agitation exclusively affecting the Musalmans, adopted the Khilafat as a National wrong and the Khilafat question found a prominent place in the programme of the National Congress. Though I greatly regret the Punjab affairs and cannot but strongly condemn the attitude of the British House of Lords and the Anglo-Indians at their unqualified support of General Dyer and his un-British actions, in spite of the Government's decision to the contrary, I cannot but admit that Mr. Gandhi's *Swatyagraha* movement (another form of Non-co-operation) went a great way in bringing about this calamity. The Hunter Committee was unanimous in its opinion that the effect of

• *Swatyaagraha* was 'to engender a familiarity and sympathy with disobedience to laws and to undermine the law abiding instincts which stand between society and out-break of violence at a time when their full strength was required' and Mr. Gandhi himself admitted that he 'under-rated the forces of evil, and that he was obliged to pause and consider how best to meet the situation.'

III. Swaraj.

This means grant of complete self-government to our country with or without British connection. I, as a Musalman, cannot advise my co-religionists to join this movement unless sufficient safe-guards are provided for the educationally backward and economically poor communities of our country. The Musalmans are in a minority and are economically poor and educationally backward, and it is admitted on all sides that so long as communal representation for Musalmans was not recognised by the authorities, they were unrepresented everywhere. It was only in his memorial speech in 1906, when a deputation headed by H. H. The Aga Khan waited upon him that Lord Minto gave his assurance to the Musalmans of India of a separate communal representation 'not only on their numerical strength but also on their political importance' and it was only since then that the Moslem representation acquired an importance hitherto unknown in the whole annals of British

Administration. We, specially in Bengal, have already suffered a great deal by the Congress-League compact and we do not like to suffer more by our adherence to a movement without sufficient safeguards to our interest, backward as we are. Though the treatment, so long accorded to us by the authorities, has not been quite satisfactory yet it is an undeniable fact that it has saved us, at least, from being swamped by the more powerful sister community. So when we find that in the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, the importance of separate representation of us, the Musalmans, has found a place, though not quite adequate to our numerical strength and political importance, we should never commit the great blunder of abstaining from joining the Reformed Councils : our chief object, henceforth, should be to undo the wrong brought about by the Congress-League compact and exact for ourselves a more adequate representation in the Councils and other local bodies in accordance with our numerical strength and political importance.

Having made it sufficiently clear that it would be a great folly and suicidal on the part of us, Musalmans, if we prefer *Swaraj* to the Reformed Councils, I shall try to examine the type of *Swaraj*, Mr. Gandhi has taken fancy to. To do this, let me quote some of Mr. Gandhi's own sayings in his 'Indian Home rule' and consider if we are prepared to accept it for our social, political and economic

regeneration. The civilisation of British type has found no place in this particular form of *Swaraj*. With Mr. Gandhi education is nothing but a snare, all machinery, an illusion, every development in way of medicine, hygiene and sanitation a devil's invention and the legal profession, "as degrading as prostitution". Mr. Gandhi says, 'Railways, Lawyers and Doctors have impoverished the country' then he takes each of them in turn and condemns as follows :—

(a) *Railways* 'It is beyond dispute that they propagate evil. God set a limit to a man's locomotive ambition in the construction of his body ; but man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit, and hence... Railways are a most dangerous institution'.

(b) *Lawyers* 'My firm opinion is lawyers have enslaved India ... and have confirmed English authority ... If pleaders were to abandon their profession and consider it just as degrading as prostitution, English rule would break in a day'.

(c) *Doctors* 'Quacks are better than highly qualified doctors ... Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery, ... there is no real humanity in the profession and it is injurious to mankind'.

(d) *Industrial Development* 'It is not that we did not know how to invent machinery ; but

our fore-fathers knew that if we set our hearts after such things we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet.

Now I ask my country-men and co-religionists if they are prepared to accept this form of *Sawraj*. A self-governing country without a lawyer at the helm will be without its very backbone ; and without railways, doctors and up to date machinery of modern production she will fall an easy prey to an outside attack and no amount of courage and valour of her soldier on the field of battle will be able to save her from the conquering hands of a foreign invasion.

IV. Non-Co-operation.

I have already dealt with this subject in my 'Thoughts on Non-co-operation' but as those 'Thoughts' should find a place under this Head, I simply quote below what I said in those 'Thoughts' with slight addition and alteration where necessary. The chief object of Non-co-operation, so far as I can judge from the words of Mr. Gandhi and his followers is to paralyse the government ultimately resulting in the grant of complete autonomy to India with or without British Suzerainty. Their proposed course of action seems to consist mainly of the boycott of the Reformed Council

and the renunciation of titles and honorary offices including nominated seats in the local bodies besides other items of which the following may be mentioned :—

(i) Giving up the practice of legal profession in the government courts.

(ii) Establishment of courts of arbitration for the settlement of disputes and not to seek redress in the law courts (established under the authority of law and government).

(iii) Dissuading parents from sending their children to the government and aided schools and colleges and educating them in new schools and colleges established by the people for the purpose.

(iv) Boycott of foreign goods.

(i) As to this, I doubt very much whether any pleader or advocate of established reputation would care to give up his profession simply in deference to the resolution adopted by a majority of votes at the National Congress and the Moslem League. We should remember the well known proverb 'Charity begins at home' and we should not lightly expect the legal profession to make so much sacrifice for the sake of the country. Their first object will unquestionably be to feed themselves and their dependants and then to look to the country, for of all incentives to action, hunger is the strongest. The experience of the last few months, also supports this view.



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(ii) This is possible only when there is a chance of compromise between the parties otherwise not. No court can be successful unless it has power to enforce its own decree. The arbitration courts will have no such power and hence cannot be a substitute for the existing law courts and hence no one will care to come to them for redress.

(iii) If we insist upon this, we shall be simply losers. The existing aided and state schools and colleges will continue to exist but though we pay taxes and education is a legitimate charge upon the public revenue, we shall not derive any benefit from them. On the contrary, we shall lose a good deal in bearing the entire expenditure of the education of our children which is not possible for the majority of our people to bear. If, however, the Non-Co-operationists could establish a net-work of schools and colleges and make arrangements for the spread of popular education on a sounder basis, I would have been the first to congratulate them and join their camp. But when it has now become evident that all **their** efforts have been concentrated palpably in preying upon the unreflecting, uncultured, impulsive, tender-hearted and uncultivated young minds in breeding discontent and a spirit of insubordination to their guardians as well as to the established government and when we consider the depth of mischief they are aiming at, in ruining the very cause of education and thereby

threatening the very foundation of our society and the future of our community, we cannot but strongly condemn the attitude of these evil-doers and try our best to check their activities in the threatened wholesale eradication of the existing schools and colleges. For, if we be not careful at the very outset and these evil-doers be once allowed to get their hold upon the juvenile minds, the result will not be far to seek. Fired with enthusiasm these misguided youths will not sit at rest but will find some outlet and Heaven knows where they will drift. Education as a transferred subject under the Reforms scheme will be under the guidance and control of our ministers ; hence to nationalise education is now within our easy reach. Why should we then allow a destructive campaign against the existing schools and colleges ?

(iv) We have already seen the futility of such attempt in the days of Bengal Partition. A wholesale boycott of foreign goods is never possible under the present circumstances. It will result only in rise in prices. Success in the movement is only possible if we can make adequate provision for the production of our every day necessities of life in the country. But this in itself will necessitate importation of plants and machinery from foreign countries.

Now, then, the only field left to us is the boycotting of the Council and the renunciation

of titles and Honorary offices. In this too, I am afraid, we cannot expect a complete success. The Moderates have openly deserted the camp and the Nationalists themselves were not unanimous in coming to the above decision. The result of the recent polling of the Calcutta University constituency where more than 66% actually recorded their votes makes one pause and consider if it is at all worthwhile to adhere to a movement which has been taken no notice of by the educated class in the country. Supposing even at some future date, all of us refrain from going to the Council and renounce our titles and Honorary offices, will that paralyse the Government?

What benefit then, do we get by adopting this course? It is admitted that unless we can **paralyse the Government** we cannot force them to give us more than what they are prepared to give. If, as it is said, Non-co-operation is an alternate for cannon and guns, this weapon of Non-co-operation, I am afraid, is too feeble to give a crushing defeat to the bureaucrats (as we call them). If we are prepared to fight and not to compromise the method to be adopted should be as sharp and effective as those used by a victorious general on the field of battle. I do not mean that we should take to arms but that, as Non-co-operation is said to be an alternative for arms, I am afraid, it cannot be compared even with bows and arrows (of ancient time) not to speak of the modern destructive

weapons of warfare. Armed with such a poor weapon as Non-co-operation we cannot expect our adversary to come down on his knees and accept the terms dictated by us. On the contrary it may have a baneful effect in paralysing our vigour and strength and even the very moral force, we speak of.

The proper course for us then is to co-operate with the authorities and prove by our zealous Co-Operation that we are fit to govern ourselves. Even if the bureaucrats do not come to our aid we may well expect the British Democratic party helping our cause and the time in that case will not be far off when our beloved India will be a Self-governing country.

Sometimes I find people talking of Egypt. I am not quite aware what course her people adopted for her regeneration but true it is that it was not the sole weapon of Non-Co-operation. Besides our country cannot be compared with Egypt. The Egyptians were one nation, professing the same religion and speaking the same dialect and over and above they had one ruler (of their own). Hence their method, I am afraid, cannot be successfully applied to India in its entirety.

To make Non-Co-operation a success *i. e.* if we want to paralyse the government, all our men serving in the Civil and Military offices should resign at once and there should be no

one to replace them. • The running of Railways and Steamers and all sorts of locomotion should be stopped. Business, Post and Telegraph offices should be closed and selling of food stuff to Europeans prohibited. In a word, there should be a general strike all round ; then only, we can achieve our end and not otherwise. But, our country is too poor to hold out long on such a general strike. It is a well known fact that a single vacancy in our offices brings in thousands of applications and hence, even to conceive of such a general strike seems like building a castle in the air. না নৌ মান্ তেল জ্বালেনা না রাধা নাচেগা ।

It will not be out of place to mention here a plain fact which experience has taught me. I know this will not be palatable to many but I must say what I know to be simple truth viz— we are not yet fit to govern ourselves. The recent experiences of pure Indian administration, in some of the districts of Bengal have taught us that English bureaucracy is far better than our Indian bureaucracy. An Englishman with inborn democratic ideas (unless from an error of judgment) will ever hesitate to do an unlawful act but with the majority of Indians it is just the reverse. I know the arguments with which this will be met viz—that we do not want such form of Self-Government ; we want control over the officials. But the Municipal

Chairmen are controlled by the people ; have they been always to our liking? I should say very seldom. Abuse of power and favouritism, it seems, are almost instinctive with us and so long as we cannot rid us from this propensity, I am of opinion, we should not clamour for more power in the administration of our country.

In the foregoing pages, I think, I have attempted to show sufficiently the absurdity of the propaganda of Non-co-operation and the inadvisability on the part of the Moslem Community to clamour for *Swaraj* without adequate safeguards at this stage of political regeneration. I shall now discuss as to what should be our course of action under the present circumstances. Co-operation with the authorities should be our motto ; and though I admit that with our hearts burning over the Khilafat question, a zealous co-operation is not possible yet it cannot but be admitted that the restoration of the Turkish Empire, if that is at all possible and we Indian Mahomedan a party to such restoration, can only be achieved by our co-operation with the authorities and not by remaining aloof from them. If we can impress upon them the absolute necessity of a Khalifa unmolested and with unrestricted temporal power to rule over the Jaziarat-al-Arab for the sake of our very faith, we may well expect their co-operation in our honest attempt in undoing a wrong unjustly inflicted upon the whole

Atlantic world by the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. For us, the Indian Musalmans, this course of action, I believe, is only suitable, di armed and dependent nation as we are.

By co-operation, however, I do not mean absolute submission to the will of the authorities. By co-operation, on the contrary I mean a self-imposed duty to advise, support and where necessary, criticise and control the authorities by our zealous and honest endeavour, for the welfare of our country in suggesting such means as would do real good to the country and to make them even not dare oppose us in our honest attempts for the prosperity and advancement of our people. We should ever bear in mind Colonel Wedgwood's remarks, 'Government in this country is sacrosanct; to criticise it is blasphemy; to distrust it is want of faith in Diety; every Indian should worship master-government on all fours begging for favours' and will be ever careful in our action.

But to do this it requires vast study, a thing unknown to the majority of our Councillors. for few amongst them are found to be men like late Mr. Gokhale and Dr. Rash Behari Ghose.

To make our co-operation a success, our first endeavour should be to forget that councils are for our respective personal advertisement, but that they are meant for the representation of

our just cause to those in authority ; and for that, men who have real insight and forethought and have thoroughly studied the different aspects of modern and upto date improved and scientific methods of Sanitation, Irrigation, Agriculture, Commerce, Manufacture and Education and their applicability to India should be given preference to all others to enter these councils ; for in these improved and scientific methods lies our regeneration and with it the economic development and prosperity of our people.

But alas ! what did actually happen in our councils all these days ? Excepting only a few most of our representatives in the council have been men who did seldom possess any practical or even theoretical knowledge of the methods alluded to and I am not afraid to say that the majority of them entered these councils rather for their self aggrandisement than for the sake of their country. To style themselves as 'The Hon'ble' was their first thought and all others came next and we can reasonably expect very little from such councillors.

I do not say there are not men amongst us who are not adorned with qualities I have mentioned above, but their number in the council is very small and though they are not many yet the few we have got have not been given sufficient opportunity to enter our councils.

In order that we may derive real benefit for our country from these councils our first thought should be to select such men from amongst us who have thoroughly studied the present social and economic situation of the country and if a sufficient number are not forthcoming from this class of people, to select such men from amongst us who have a real love for the country and are ever ready to serve her in her distress in order to bring about a complete regeneration.

Then only we can achieve our ends and not otherwise.

It is an admitted fact that our country **Economic Development** abounds in natural resources and if they are properly explored and utilised for her economic development she may be made if not the richest at least one of the wealthiest countries in the world. I may mention here that if another Tata is found to explore the falls in the Himalayas he will be able to electrify the whole country and if we can have electric power at our door we can bring about a revolution in the improvement of our agriculture, irrigation, manufacture and even sanitation not to speak of our poor decaying home industries.

Next to our economic development we **Mass Education** should give our thoughts to the education of the masses; schools and colleges

we have many but we want such institutions as would impart practical knowledge to our agriculturists and labourers, who form the bulk of our population. They are not in need of present day High and Collegiate education ; but they are in want of such education and manual training as would help them learning the practical method of the improvement of their own profession as I have clearly shown in my 'Thoughts on the problem of mass education.'

It is by the application of such educational principle that we can reasonably expect our poor cultivators to be in a position to solve their own economic problems and if this course be adopted the rays of hope will glimmer upon the masses of India and the time in that case will not be far off when these poor cultivators (of to-day) will turn into big farmers like those of up to date modern countries in Europe and America.

Next to education we should turn our thoughts **Home Industry** to the decaying home industries of our country. It is an undeniable fact that the producers of these industries get very little as their share of outturn in a market overflowed with goods produced by the modern methods of production. As these men are notorious for their poverty it is absurd to suppose that they will be able to equip themselves with the most up to date machinery of modern production. To relieve them in their distress our

first endeavour should be to bring electrical power at their doors by utilising the falls mentioned above, and this done, they will not want anything more.

The electric power will not only infuse new blood into these industrial classes but will at the same time give ample opportunity to our cultivators to apply it to their own advantage not to speak of new enterprises that will be forthcoming.

The question of exchange has also of late **Exchange** roused public controversy. Some are of opinion that the fixing of the exchange value of sovereign at Rs 10/- may afford immediate and temporary relief to our poor exchequer and the poorer classes in purchasing their cloths etc but it will strike a death blow to our nascent indigenous cloth and other factories, which under the present favourable circumstances in the abnormal rise in wages in Europe and the exchange value of sovereign not artificially interfered with, have been barely enabled to hold their own. Hence this complex and controversial subject should also receive our most careful and mature consideration.

The question of unemployment is also one of **Unemployment** grave complexity (vide my 'Thoughts on Present Discontent'). That the present discontent is mainly due to economic causes, no one

can deny. So this question of unemployment should be one of our most serious and anxious considerations.

The rule for recruitment of the Indian Civil Service Civil Service has recently been ammended ; greater facility has been given for recruitment of the people of the soil and Mr. Montague deserves credit for all he has done. Provincial government should, however, take the greatest possible care in selecting men from the 'provincial service' to the listed appointment. Personally I am not in the least in favour of such recruitment as I am decidedly of opinion that a man recruited from the 'provincial service' can seldom control his former colleagues (in the provincial service) and as such his administration is bound to be a failure. If the government, however, is bent upon taking a few men from the 'provincial service' I would advise them to select a few exceptionally brilliant men from amongst the junior officers and place them in charge of such offices as are generally held by a junior I. C. S. before placing them in charge of a district. Such officers should also have some training in England.

India's army holds a subordinate position and Army & Navy is controlled by the war office of England and an Indian Navy is almost unknown though a great deal is spent for the naval defence of the country. This state of things should be discontinued and Indian army and navy should be

placed directly under the government of India as a distinct element and independant of the Imperial Defence Force. Colour bar should be abolished and the proportion of Indians to the total strength of commissioned rank should be at least 2 to 1 within the next 10 years. Condition of ranks and file should be improved and volunteer system should be encouraged in right earnest. Indian Army and Navy should be Indian in name and spirit and should never be used for Imperial purpose without the express permission of the government of India.

Our nation-building should be solely from *Nation Building* within and not from without. Hence the whole burden is bound to fall on our own shoulder and the success in the movement will depend upon sacrifices, we will be prepared to make; the goal can only be reached when we can be truly styled as Indian and not as Hindu, Musalman, Jaina, Parsi etc. Religious differences should be forgotten totally from our mind and love for the country should find the foremost place in our heart and soul. Religious sentiments have no place in the present day politics and never should we suppose that such sacrifices which have the ultimate aim of establishing a few more *Pinjrapoles*, can in any way help nation-building in our country. We should be prepared for the worst if we are really in earnest; inter-social gathering and inter-communal marriages.

should only be considered as a stepping stone in this movement.

If our councillors in the Reformed Councils ^{Conclusion} are properly selected, that is, if they are selected from the class of people I have suggested, and they give their thoughts to these lines of action and should they succeed in their honest endeavour (and I see no reason why they should not) most of our real wants will be satisfied and come to an end; and the time will not be far off when pledges given to us by our Beloved Sovereign will be fulfilled and the grant of Self-Government to our country, an accomplished fact.

(38)

After all what I have said it may be safely laid down that the path to the Home Rule, the Congress is demanding lies not along the road of Non-co-operation, but in an honest attempt to get the most out of the very substantial Reforms about to be put into effect with the convocation of the Legislative Councils. Let us then co-operate in what little we have got and with God over head set to work and strive to get more until we achieve our end. Our progress may be slow but it will be sure.

